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Chapter 28

University of Nevada, Las Vegas

Liaisons and Teaching Librarians—Navigating Overlapping Responsibilities and Identities

Chelsea Heinbach and Susan Wainscott

Population Served

University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV) is a public, doctoral-granting research university that recently earned Carnegie Foundation R1 ranking.¹ Of our approximately 28,000 students, about 23,000 are undergraduates.² UNLV has sixteen degree-granting academic colleges and schools, including a law school and a medical school. It is a minority-serving institution; is among the most diverse college campuses in the United States; and is an Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander-Serving Institution and Hispanic-Serving Institution.³ Many undergraduates are first-generation students, and more than 90 percent commute to campus.⁴

UNLV is a young and innovative university founded in 1957. As the university is unburdened by a legacy library collection or deeply seated traditions, librarians have the opportunity to pursue roles not traditionally afforded to them. For example, after nearly

a decade without a teaching and learning center on campus, librarians at UNLV have been able to use their pedagogical expertise to lead teaching initiatives. Additionally, our librarians are tenure-eligible faculty with expectations for scholarship and service. This provides opportunities to meet and collaborate with colleagues outside the library by contributing to or leading campus-wide initiatives.

Program Scope

The instruction program at UNLV Libraries aims to create vertically aligned programmatic instruction that is embedded into the curriculum. We are involved in classes where students are required to do research. This includes first-year seminars, English Composition II, and milestone and culminating experience classes. We also work with various other undergraduate, graduate, and professional courses. We estimate that around 70 percent of our undergraduate students experience library instruction during their time at UNLV.

We contribute to learning in the classroom through course-integrated instruction, online learning objects, research consultations, assessment, research assignments cocreated with instructors, and various combinations of these methods. The assignment requirements of each class, desired learning outcomes, and expertise of both librarians and instructors influence what strategy is best in a given situation.

Our online tutorials and research guides are often created for specific courses, but they are available to all students through the learning management system and the library website. In addition to these strategies, UNLV Libraries offers cocurricular events and workshops that contribute significantly to student learning.⁵

We prioritize just-in-time, course-integrated instruction with direct assignment ties over just-in-case sessions. On occasion, we may decline a session if it is unlikely to be meaningful for students or sustainable across semesters. We might suggest using a collaboratively built research assignment or preexisting materials such as tutorials or course guides to ensure classes are informed by the librarians' expertise, even if they are not teaching a session.

Operations

There are various departments throughout UNLV Libraries that contribute to information literacy education. The Educational Initiatives department (EI), Liaison Librarian Program (LLP), Branch Libraries, Special Collections department, and Knowledge Production department all teach course-integrated information literacy. Based on the experiences of the authors and for the purposes of this chapter, we will focus exclusively on the programmatic, vertically aligned instruction conducted by two departments: EI and LLP (see figure 28.1).

EI is focused on general education and outreach and includes one department head, five teaching and learning librarians (TLLs), an outreach librarian, five to seven undergraduate peer research coaches, and a library technician (a skilled staff position that does not require an MLIS). This department also often temporarily hires students as information literacy fellows who contribute to teaching efforts. Meanwhile, the LLP is focused on subject-specific education and outreach and includes one department head, eleven liaison librarians (LLs), and a library technician.

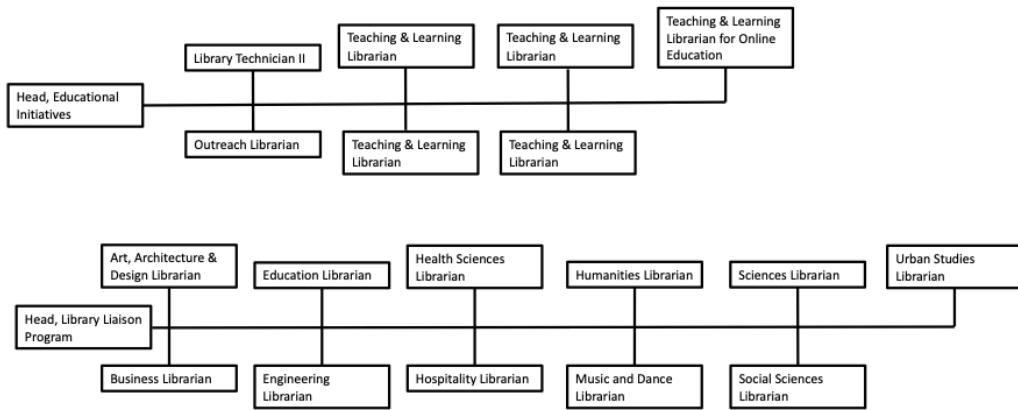


Figure 28.1

An organizational chart depicting the EI department and the LLP.

Roles and Responsibilities

Disclaimer: These are generalizations, and both TLL and LL roles allow for exploration and expertise in many areas. For example, LLs also contribute to the professional development of the library community and sometimes lead first-year classes. TLLs also help with upper-level courses in some cases.

Due to their focus on general education, EI has primary responsibility for English composition classes and most of the first-year seminars (FYSs). The English Composition II class focuses on research and scholarly writing and is UNLV's highest enrolled course, with around sixty sections of twenty-four students each in the fall semester and ninety sections in the spring. This totals around 3,600, or approximately 59 percent of first-year students. FYSs at UNLV are separated by college, and each TLL leads outreach and instruction for the FYSs in one or two colleges. Most FYS library partnerships are led by the TLL, though there are some exceptions.

The undergraduate peer research coaches help EI design the library instruction for English composition. They also teach part of the lesson in every English Composition II library session and are an integral part of the instruction program.⁶ As mentioned previously, we sometimes have temporary student employees, and these students help us with instruction, outreach, and research projects as well.

Meanwhile, the LLP has primary responsibility for the remaining undergraduate and graduate courses. For example, the authors of this chapter share coordination for the College of Engineering. Chelsea, as the TLL, leads assignment design, teaching, and outreach initiatives with instructors for the FYS. She consults with Sue, the engineering librarian, on the unique needs of engineering students. Chelsea and Sue choose to teach the library session of the FYS together, though that is not required. Meanwhile, Sue leads the instruction and outreach for upper-level and graduate classes in the college, while sometimes inviting Chelsea to co-teach or consulting with her for teaching ideas.

The two departments coordinate on curriculum mapping and strive to scaffold learning outcomes across degree programs. In the event of vacancies or overwhelming workloads within the library, both TLLs and LLs might take on instruction outside their usual areas.

Administrative Support

Library administration has invested resources into building a curriculum-integrated library instruction program. For example, the Committee on Culture of Teaching and Learning, which developed a set of campus-wide undergraduate learning outcomes, was chaired by the libraries' dean for its first two years.⁷ Because of this work, library values were represented in the revision of the general education program.

The libraries also invest financially in the instruction program in various ways. For example, they supply donor money for Faculty Institutes, a librarian-led professional development opportunity for faculty more fully described in the next section of this chapter.⁸ EI also regularly receives one-time funding for the aforementioned part-time information literacy fellows, who work on research and teaching projects. Librarians are given additional financial support to seek out teaching-related professional development such as ACRL Immersion, a week-long intensive program focused on information literacy education.

Marketing

UNLV Libraries market information literacy instruction through a combination of efforts including traditional communications, relationship building, and professional development on campus.

Communications

The Director of Communications and the multimedia designer in the UNLV Libraries Development and Communications department create the majority of our traditional marketing materials, including a library newsletter for disciplinary faculty. They also communicate librarian initiatives and accomplishments to campus venues such as the daily campus newsletter and the research magazine *Innovation*.⁹ These venues regularly feature librarian initiatives and research, many of which focus on instruction.

Additionally, LLs send periodic emails to disciplinary faculty and instructors, and EI maintains a web page that includes programmatic learning outcomes and ways we collaborate with faculty.¹⁰ The website also has an online form that instructors can use to request a teaching session.

Building Relationships

Librarians in EI and the LLP seek to build long-term relationships with their respective disciplinary faculty. Relationships often grow steadily, and what begins as a request for a database demonstration may expand over time to include anything from assignment design partnerships to embedded librarianship. In time, a successful experience with one course can transfer to other teaching opportunities through word of mouth or shifting teaching assignments.

Professional Development for Faculty

UNLV Libraries offer many professional development opportunities for disciplinary faculty. These include workshops, consultations on emerging technologies, partnership in assignment design, and multiday institutes. These are all chances for librarians to demonstrate their expertise and expose disciplinary faculty to the ways they could work with librarians.

Perhaps the most unique professional development program the libraries offer is the two-day intensive workshop called the Faculty Institute. Offered and led by EI annually since 2010, these institutes assist faculty and instructors in integrating information literacy into their curriculum and assignments.¹¹ We advertise through our website, where we encourage faculty to apply to the latest institute. Faculty Institutes focus on various topics, including research assignments for first-year seminars, creative research assignments, and more. Participants receive a stipend of between \$500 and \$1,000 for attending and leave the institute with a completed syllabus and research assignment informed by the expertise of library workers from multiple departments. Around twenty participants attend each institute.

The first set of Faculty Institutes were scaffolded over several years to support the aforementioned revision of the core curriculum, including the FYIS, second-year seminars, milestone, and capstone courses.¹² Current Faculty Institutes focus on creative assignment design and revamping the English composition curriculum.

In addition to the Faculty Institutes, librarians are engaged in other teaching and learning events on campus. For example, when the campus created a Teaching for Retention Workshop using the Transparency in Learning and Teaching (TILT) method, librarians were invited as experts in teaching and assignment design.¹³

Collaboration

Library workers collaborate with a large group of external partners. The Office of Online Education, the Office of Undergraduate Education, and the Office of Academic Assessment are some of the strongest allies of the instruction program. TLLs and LLs both partner with non-degree-granting departments such as the Academic Success Center, Career Services, The Intersection (a multicultural education center), the local public school district, and more.

As discussed earlier, both the TLLs and LLs work with faculty, administrators, and staff responsible for advising, tutoring, and program development to integrate information literacy education into the curriculum. LLs also collaborate with disciplinary faculty to develop collections that are relevant to students and course assignments. In addition, as described in several publications, librarians partner with instructors on scholarship of teaching and learning studies.¹⁴

This model also requires that librarians in both of these roles collaborate heavily with one another. Each pair assigned to a core undergraduate course must navigate differences in working styles to communicate with instructors, share lesson plans, and collect assessment data. LLs and TLLs may also act as backup instructors for one another. It is expected that each of us will make intentional efforts to share documentation for course session materials and build relationships with our library colleagues. Currently,

the LL and TLL groups schedule periodic, informal, and supervisor-free meetups to share announcements and brainstorm solutions to collective challenges. These meetups are in addition to periodic joint staff meetings where the two departments work on strategic planning.

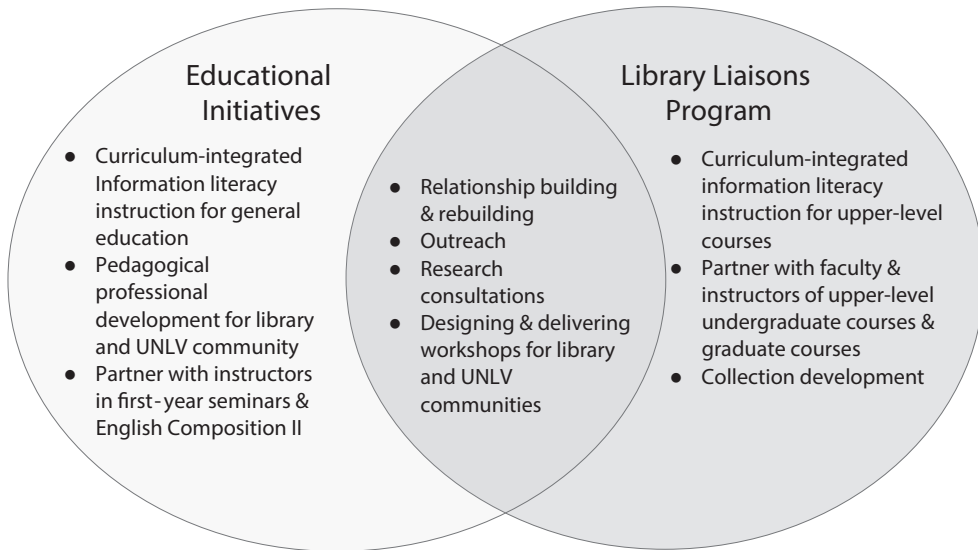
A unique collaboration in the EI department is the collective design of the library's Composition II class session. Every two years everyone in the department discusses limitations and strengths of the current lesson plan and decides how to proceed the next year. For example, in 2018 we changed the activities completely. The entire department met to identify learning outcomes and brainstorm ideas for how we could meet them. Then, a voluntary subgroup designed a draft lesson plan, tested it with students and librarians, gathered feedback from the department as a whole, and finalized the lesson.

While our departments share similar goals, our collaboration is not without tension. The model of two departments serving the same disciplines began in 2015, and in some ways is still in transition.¹⁵ As we mentioned above, there are exceptions to the tidy splitting up of FYS and upper-division and graduate courses, so we do not yet have a simple division of labor. It is understandable that a new model might cause some uncertainty around roles. For example, some LLs are concerned that they will not have substantial time with students. As some programs don't have many research assignments between first and final years, students may not meet their LL in the classroom setting until late in their academic career. LLs may prefer more contact with students, faculty, instructors, and teaching assistants as it informs the rest of their work in collection development, upper-level instruction, and more.

Meanwhile, the TLLs' focus on first-year students may incorrectly be perceived as a "helper" role to the LL. It may seem that they are there to teach what the LL is not interested in, instead of being an equal partner with valuable expertise. This incorrect assessment of the role of the TLL may be made by disciplinary faculty, students, LLs, or library leadership. It diminishes the perceived value of the instruction provided by those who teach information literacy in early undergraduate courses.

Compounding this tension is a sense of territory around colleges and degree programs, including the core curriculum courses. Colleges design their FYS to provide academic success skills and an introduction to the discipline. There is an assumption that most students in an FYS will continue in that subject area; however, students' enrollment in an FYS is not a definitive indicator of the major they will continue through. About 30 percent of students take a general FYS, such as Exploring Majors, or one that doesn't align with their ultimate degree.¹⁶ This data indicates that the emphasis of FYSs should be on general education.

The complexity of this model (see figure 28.2) can also cause confusion outside the library. Without understanding the differences between our roles, instructors may reach out to a librarian who isn't the right fit for their course. Students may experience discipline-specific needs throughout their academic careers through student organization projects, personal research interests, or career exploration and may not realize that the disciplines have an assigned LL. Meanwhile, instructors teaching FYSs may refer their students to an LL they know rather than seeking out the TLL most familiar with that course. A library culture that encourages referrals is key to ensuring that undergraduates are properly served as their information needs evolve.



Disclaimer that these are generalizations and both roles allow for exploration and expertise in many areas. It is not altogether uncommon for liaisons to also contribute to the professional development of the library community and assist with first-year classes or for the librarians in Educational Initiatives to help with upper-level courses.

Figure 28.2

This image depicts a Venn diagram of common duties shared and divided between the Educational Initiatives Department and Liaison Librarian Program.

Assessment

EI contributes to the three-year assessment cycle on campus.¹⁷ This is coordinated by a TLL and the head of EI. The overall goal of this project changes every three years. For example, in the 2015–2018 cycle, we focused on students' ability to develop research questions. We did this by evaluating student work, including final papers and annotated bibliographies, using rubrics rating information literacy learning outcomes. In the 2019–2021 cycle, we will work to answer new questions about student learning at UNLV.

UNLV Libraries also reports out to a multi-institutional assessment project led by the Greater Western Library Alliance (GWLA) Student Learning Outcomes Task Force.¹⁸ All library instructors report their course-related instruction data in Springshare's LibAnalytics. Librarians are also encouraged to use formative and summative assessment activities of their choosing in the classroom.

Pedagogical Highlights

What We Teach

EI crafted five guiding learning outcomes that serve as broad goals that all of UNLV Libraries' varied instruction efforts work toward. Four of these are aimed at curricular goals and align with the ACRL *Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education* (see figure 28.3),¹⁹ and one is affective and represents a combination of our curricular and cocurricular work. The campus has a set of common undergraduate learning outcomes for all degree programs, known as the University Undergraduate Learning Outcomes (UULOs).²⁰ Our information literacy outcomes contribute to four of the five UULOs: Intellectual Breadth and Lifelong Learning; Inquiry and Critical Thinking; Communication and Global/Multicultural Knowledge and Awareness; and Citizenship and Ethics.



Figure 28.3

Map of programmatic learning outcomes to University Undergraduate Learning Outcomes and the ACRL Framework for Information Literacy in Higher Education

TLLs focus on transferable skills in English composition and FYSS. English composition library instruction currently focuses on keywords, evaluating the components of a scholarly article, and discovery layer searching. As every FYS is unique, the information

literacy curriculum is approached by balancing the expertise and goals of the TLL, the LL, the instructor, and the coordinator from the college. Teaching at this level often includes discussing information needs and formats, exploring the information life cycle, writing research questions, and fostering a sense of belonging within the library. Alongside instructors, TLLs might design creative research assignments such as infographic creation, Wikipedia editing, and poster design to encourage student engagement and demystify the research process. Because most students will take both Composition II and an FYS, library instructors avoid duplicating content and focus on reinforcing and building upon skills and knowledge.

Meanwhile, LLs use their familiarity with disciplinary practices to create customized course guides, provide information literacy instruction, and collaborate with disciplinary faculty on course and assignment design. LLs use curriculum mapping and degree program goals to focus on key upper-level undergraduate and graduate courses and scaffold learning activities. They may collaborate with TLLs or not, depending on the needs of the class.

For example, Sue (LL) is embedded in a required culminating experience senior design engineering course. For this course she teaches two sessions, and Chelsea (TLL) collaborates with her on one of them. In the first session, Chelsea leads a brainstorming exercise for design-alternative development and search term exploration. The students then utilize this exercise to identify information needs, and Sue generates database and other resource suggestions based on needs identified. Sue runs the second class session without Chelsea. This class focuses on data literacy, and students follow a directed exploration of several databases with relevant data sets.

Community of Practice

Our model encourages a community of practice. The LLP and EI share learning outcomes and goals for the undergraduate core curriculum.²¹ These collective goals, combined with regular opportunities to share best practices, new ideas, and lessons learned, keep the two departments aligned. The EI department collectively creates the curriculum for Composition II class sessions, and the FYS and Faculty Institutes call for partnerships between TLLs and LLs. In addition, EI hosts informal learning opportunities for the libraries, such as brown bags or lightning talk events where library workers from all departments can share educational theory, strategies, and activities. EI also facilitates more formal workshops, such as how to develop learning outcomes or strategies for active learning.

We are lucky to have collective expertise between our departments that informs our work, conversations, and teaching practice. Library workers from multiple departments are exploring the ACRL *Framework* in the classroom, and many are contributing to the literature.²² In addition, the head of EI is an ACRL Immersion Program Facilitator and an LL is a presenter for the “Engaging with the ACRL Framework” ACRL RoadShow.²³

Administrative Highlights

We are fortunate to have an experienced library technician who contributes to the instruction program greatly through teaching and through administrative tasks such as scheduling, classroom and technology management, and coordination. This position supports the partnership between TLLs and the English composition program by fielding over

150 instruction requests and teaching several classes. This position also coordinates and teaches for an FYS course and conducts outreach to the K–12 community in surrounding Clark County.

Our lead TLL for English composition and our library technician both contribute to scheduling English composition classes by adding course requests to a shared spreadsheet. They send this sheet to library instructors in EI, who sign up for the classes they are available to teach. Then, the library instructors reach out to the instructor of record to set up a meeting to discuss the library session and what they can expect from the library instructor that semester.

Information Literacy Coordinator Profile

The tasks of an information literacy coordinator are somewhat decentralized in our staffing model, but many core aspects of this role are undertaken by the head of EI. The head of EI has a middle management, tenured-faculty position and is able to avoid some of the pitfalls of a “coordinator” role.²⁴ The coordination of the English composition program is shared between the head of EI, the library technician in EI, and the TLL who is liaison to the English composition program. The TLLs that work with FYSs and LLs generally coordinate their own instruction with disciplinary faculty. For example, the authors of this chapter share coordination of the College of Engineering. As mentioned above, Chelsea leads instruction to the FYS in engineering and Sue leads upper-level and graduate courses.

What We Wish People Knew

Within this model, it is important to foster a collaborative culture with space for connection between the two departments. Opportunities for informal discussions to brainstorm new ideas, share information, solve problems, and air grievances can encourage trust and help ensure these groups stay informed. The preferred collaboration will differ from pair to pair and would likely be negatively impacted by standardization.

However, centralized communication and support from department heads are necessary. It is vital for department heads to clarify roles and responsibilities for new librarians as well as for those being assigned to new roles. The department heads also need to communicate closely with one another to ensure a common understanding of shared goals, milestones, and deadlines. This can help identify when the groups need to meet to address challenges.

This dual-department model is challenging at times, but also offers opportunities for fruitful collaboration, continued learning, and trust between colleagues. Libraries considering adoption of this model would benefit from surveying existing staff to identify needs in their current staffing model. Holistic appraisal of roles and a transition plan may also be valuable. This model offers a scalable approach that leverages the differing expertise of library workers. In academia, which is riddled by silos, it is powerful to have a consistent

reminder that we all share the same goal of student success and to learn from each other as we work to achieve it.

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